4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

177 668 ing on Johns Island, the first chapters of the NAACP were being organized in South Carolina. By 1920 there were more than a thousand members in chapters around the state.

But the NAACP was an extremely cautious organization in those early decades. It took as its mission the improvement of black life within the segregated system rather than challenging the state's official racism. Unfortunately, its cautious approach enhanced the white stereotype that blacks were "contented." When the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP was formed in 1929, however, a shift occurred from "uplift" to a quest for equality. Three major legal cases—the teachers' salary equalization suit, the challenge to the all-white Democratic primary, and the suit for admission to the law school of the University of South Carolina—advanced the cause in the 1940s. When *Briggs v. Elliott*, the Clarendon County school case, was filed in 1950, the NAACP legal staff decided to launch a direct attack against public school segregation. *Briggs v. Elliott* was the only case from the Deep South in the package of cases upon which the United States Supreme Court, in a historic decision on May 17, 1954, declared segregated public schools inherently unequal. After the 177 668 NAACP's aggressive legal action, the South Carolina legislature passed a law in 1955 forbidding 875 any city or state employee to belong to the NAACP. Septima Clark, a long-time member of the organization, was dismissed from her elementary school teaching position. Although she had taught in the Charleston County school system for almost forty years, the Charleston County School Board denied her retirement pay when she was fired. She then took a job with Highlander Folk School.

In 1957, with training and assistance from 891 Highlander Folk School, Septima Clark and Esau 895 Jenkins began the first citizenship education school 641 on Johns Island. They chose Bernice Robinson to 666 be the first teacher. The classes did not merely stick to reading and writing for voter registration but also discussed the power that people could have if they know how government is organized. The islanders became aware of their rights as citizens and learned ways to achieve them. By 1960

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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nearly six hundred registered black voters were added to the rolls in Charleston County through the efforts of the citizenship school.

Guy Carawan first arrived on Johns Island on Christmas eve of 1959, and Esau Jenkins took him to the all-night Christmas Watch Meeting in Moving Star Hall. There Guy encountered African cultural survivals and what he called "the oldest form of Negro folk life still alive today in the United States." He had come to Johns Island from Highlander Folk School to learn about sea island culture and to serve as a chauffeur for Septima Clark, who did not drive. A native Californian with family roots in South Carolina, he had a master's degree in sociology and some training in folklore when he came to live with Esau Jenkins on Johns Island. Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins took Guy to community meetings and church services, where he met and sang with various members of the black community. "With these two beloved leaders to vouch for me," he noted at the time, "I've had the inside track in getting to know people who under different circumstances might be suspicious and unfriendly." He was inspired by the islanders' Afro-Christianity and their "praise house" form of worship. He thrilled to the old sea island spirituals and the islanders' "shouting" style of singing them. He fell in love with the sea island folktales and folk beliefs. He immediately recognized the importance of the rich folk culture he encountered on Johns Island, which would bring him back to the island year after year.

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During his first winter on Johns Island, Guy developed a singing program as a new feature of the citizenship schools. The singing program had two purposes. One was to help keep alive the islanders' beautiful singing traditions. The other was to build group consciousness and boost morale by singing the old spirituals, protest songs, and other folk songs. The singing program proved to have profound inspirational value for everyone who participated.

One day Guy sang a version of "Keep Your Hand on the Plow." He had learned the song in the 1950s as part of the Peoples' Songs Movement. Alice Wine told him she knew "a different echo to that" and sang a sea island version. Guy passed on

(P. ix-A)

4; Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

her version, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," to young civil rights workers at conferences in 1960. Thus it was that the Johns Island version of this spiritual became one of the great inspirational theme songs of the civil rights movement.

In 1961, prompted by the rapid growth of citizenship schools to other islands and the Charleston area, Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson developed the first program to train citizenship school teachers. This curriculum spread throughout the South as participants came from the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Thousands of teachers were trained. Such community leaders as Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi and Hosea Williams in Georgia went home to teach and to organize voter registration campaigns. They simply refused to put up with segregation anymore. By 1962, when the major civil rights groups turned their attention to voter registration, they were able to use the approach pioneered in the citizenship schools between 1957 and 1961 because by then it was clear that the approach worked. Thus the citizenship schools on Johns Island were the foundation for the voting rights movement and played a major role in the overthrow of Jim Crow.

SINCE 1959 Guy had spent part of each year working with the citizenship school on Johns Island. In 1961 Guy married Candie Anderson; and in 1963 they moved to Johns Island with their small son, Evan. During the next two years they shared in the life and fellowship of the black community around Moving Star Hall. Their purpose was to help preserve some of the older black folk culture on the island by bringing honor and recognition to it. As Guy wrote to Pete Seeger in 1965, "These days, you can go to any one of the major folk festivals at Berkeley, UCLA, Chicago, Philadelphia, or Newport and see some of the finest folk talent in the country. But the communities from which these people come have been neglected. Leadbelly and his music are forgotten in Shreveport, Louisiana. I'm hoping our work on Johns Island (South Carolina) will provide an example of what can be done in other areas. It would be a shame to let this music die at the roots." To that end Guy and Candie

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

cation and voter registration. The man who organized the Progressive Club was Esau Jenkins, who was born and raised on Johns Island and became one of the most effective grass roots leaders in the South. It was Esau who first conceived the Citizenship School Program, which the Reverend Martin Luther King's organization later administered throughout the South. The remarkable story of Esau's life and his efforts to bring progress to Johns Island is told in chapter 6. At that time it was not so clear how important the spread of the Citizenship School Program across the South was to be. A chapter has been added to trace the history of the program in the 1950s and its subsequent impact on the civil rights movement.

Esau Jenkins died in 1972, and his wisdom and understanding, his fighting spirit, are missed by all. In December 1987, while we were interviewing people for the update to this book, Septima Clark also died. A teacher all her life, she taught on Johns Island in 1916 as a teenager. She was part of the Charleston County school system until 1956, when she was fired for belonging to the NAACP. She then went to work for the Highlander Folk School and became supervisor of the literacy program in the sea islands. At the time of her death, she was recognized nationally as an educator and civil rights leader.

In 1988 many of the families who told their stories in the early 1960s still live on Johns Island. Most of the older people have passed on, of course, and children have grown and married and have children of their own. The younger generation has received more education, sometimes quite sophisticated skills. Gerald Mackey is a good example. At the end of chapter 6 he can be seen as a teenager riding in the back of a truck on the way to work in the fields. Today he is an evaluator of teachers for the school system and a candidate for his doctorate. Esau's children became teachers, community workers, a lawyer, the administrator of a major health care delivery system on Johns Island.

Bill Saunders told us in 1965 that had he been born white, he might have accomplished something. He nevertheless has gone on to accomplish a

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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people who are willing to see to it that our children will get a high school, plus transportation to take them to and from school."

The white kids were riding in school buses, and the buses were warm when they got into it. When they got to the school, the schools were warm. Yet our children had to walk between eight and ten miles per day, go to a cold school with no heat. The teachers that teach the school, they live in Charleston—fifteen or eighteen miles away—and the children have to stand outside until the teachers come. Then when the teachers come, if they didn't have any wood, they got to go out in back of the school and get wood to make up the fire. Whether it raining, whether it cold, whether it snowing, those children have to walk there, and after they got the fire started, it being so cold, I don't think they could concentrate so well. And beside that they

[142]
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[p. 153]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. William Saunders

I'M PRETTY BITTER ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT

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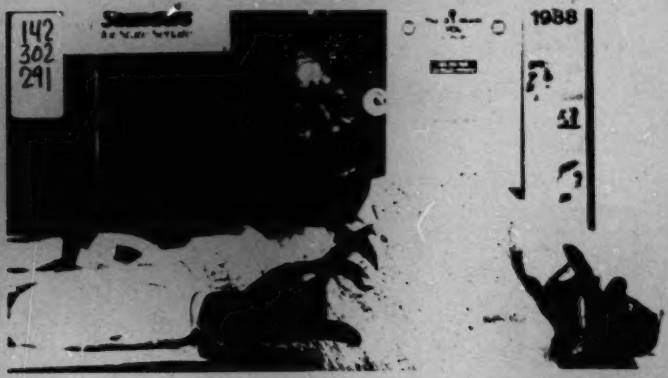
I've been thinking about Mrs. Septima Clark. Here's a person who got fired from a system after teaching over thirty years for belonging to an organization that she would not denounce (NAACP). They refused to give her even her retirement. That same system, that same power base, allows her fifteen, twenty years later to be on the school board. That same power base turns around later on and says, "You can have your retirement." And that same power base is saying, the mayor is saying, the governor is saying, "This woman is a hero." There's something wrong with that!

Those power brokers can say, "At eighty years old we can make you a hero; we can line your wall with plaques; because you're no more threat to us." And the reason we can make you a hero is that now we got to look out for Bill Saunders and them that is coming along. And they're the ones that's going to give us some trouble. And as new people come along, then some of us become worthless, so we get plaques and stuff.

When the superintendent of the school system for the state can say, on the morning that Mrs. Clark dies, that there's nothing wrong with our school system, we got a perfect school system, there's no bias, there's no problem, and that will go. And then the judge turns around and says yes, the only problem is poverty and it will take fifty to a hundred years to straighten that out, and then they say Mrs. Clark is a hero. The mayor says, "There's nobody like her. She never got loud, she never raised her voice, she's sweet, and she got things done. We loved her." I'm pretty bitter about things like that.



142
302
291

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Gerald Mackey

YOU NEVER KNOW THE NUMBER OF LIVES YOU TOUCH

The employment situation for young people nationwide is extremely frustrating. I work with the division of personnel for the Charleston County School District. We have problems getting black teachers in the school system. For example, Charleston County hired approximately 224 teachers at the beginning of the school year and approximately 21 of the 224 were black. When you look at the racial composition of the district, you have more black than white students. So we have a problem with black teachers and administrators coming into the district. It's one of the reasons why the desegregation suit brought by the Justice Department and others is now going on.

In some schools in the county, we have no black teachers. In some of the larger schools, you might have two or three. There is no equity in student-teacher ratio in terms of black and white. So the kids have very few black role models in terms of teachers. That's a very sad indictment on a system when kids come up from kindergarten through high school and not see a black teacher. Another argument that we make in the county is that blacks are not going into teaching. They're considering other options like science or math, and they're going into the industries. They're studying computer science and engineering and medicine, and they're not going into teaching. But it's going to be sad again for the kids.

I wouldn't trade my experience of being a classroom teacher for anything in the world. You never know the number of lives you touch. Teaching is very rewarding.

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

I THINK THAT'S A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

With the Sea Island Health Care Corporation, the Citizens' Committee, the Ministerial Alliance, Johns Island's going to be a better place to live. With the dedication we have now we have turned that exodus of young people leaving the island around. We have seen some engineers and attorneys and professional people coming back home to live. And if they're not living here, they're still making a contribution by coming back periodically, making their presence known, sharing their knowledge, or making a financial contribution. There's much more of that now than there was ten years ago. I think that's a step in the right direction.

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

*Mr. Myles Horton**

THE PEOPLE OF JOHNS ISLAND DESERVE TRIBUTE

The citizenship schools were inspired by Esau Jenkins who was trying to teach his Johns Island bus passengers to pass the South Carolina literacy test required for voting. In a 1955 Highlander Folk School workshop he had asked for help. In an effort to respond, we spent the next two years acquainting ourselves with the culture of the island and with the people. We found out by living and working with them what their problems were and that they wanted to be voting citizens.

Bernice Robinson was chosen to teach the first citizenship school because she respected the people and, having had no teaching experience, would be nonjudgmental and experimental. She began the first class in the back room of a cooperative store by saying, "I am not a teacher; we are here to learn together. You're going to teach me as much as I am going to teach you."

The curriculum was developed day by day. They learned to write letters, to order from catalogs, and fill out money orders. They made stories about the vegetables they grew and the tools they used, the chairs and tables in the room. They moved on to reading the Declaration of Human Rights, which hung on the wall, and the South Carolina constitution, which was a prerequisite of becoming a voter.

Music and singing familiar songs livened up the long evenings and blended with the joy of learning. Singing sea island folk songs, spirituals, and protest songs helped build the group's consciousness and boosted morale as together they tackled the difficult task of learning to read and write.

This pioneer citizenship school, which met biweekly for three months, grew from fourteen to thirty-seven students. It was soon followed by a second school. Out of the first two schools, sixty people, two-thirds the total enrollment, passed the literacy test for voting. That is, they "graduated."

Esau Jenkins had an explanation for this accomplishment. He said, "No one wants anything more than to be a first-class citizen. That is what makes you learn what you have to learn." Their motivation was for an achievable goal rooted in their culture. Although each individual had to learn to read for him or herself, they studied as a group, they supported and encouraged each other as they painfully struggled to read. As they took the first steps in learning to read and write, they made use of what they had learned without delay. The process that evolved was simple and easy to explain and could easily be adopted elsewhere, making the multiplying process easy.

The enthusiastic new voters immediately spread the word to neighboring South Carolina and Georgia sea islands. Soon the citizenship schools were started on Edisto and Wadmalaw islands, and before the three months period ended, half those enrolled had learned to read and write well enough to pass

*Founder and former director of the Highlander Folk School.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

142
362
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the literacy test and become registered voters. Some had organized their community for discussions of civic issues and voter registration campaigns. Later, as on Johns Island, they would run for public office and provide leadership in the emerging civil rights movement.

In 1961 the citizenship school program was transferred from Highlander to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In the meantime Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson had developed a residential program for training volunteers who wanted to be citizenship school teachers.

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Before becoming the educational arm of the SCLC, the number of teachers trained were counted in the hundreds, but after the transfer, Septima Clark reported that they were counted in the thousands. More impressive than these figures was the vitality of the educational process which set in motion a liberating force that gave dignity and collective power to thousands of black people throughout the South.

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The people of Johns Island deserve tribute for the role they played in the origin and development of a citizenship/literacy movement that became a vital part of the civil rights movement and has achieved international recognition. Special tribute is due to the first pioneer citizenship school, created by a teacher who had never taught before and her students who had never been to school; and to the coordinator Septima Clark and especially to Esau Jenkins whose idea it was in the first place.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

871
291

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Mrs. Bernice Robinson

I STARTED TO TEACH THEM WHAT THEY WANTED TO LEARN

When they asked me to teach the course, I said I would help but I wouldn't teach because I wasn't a teacher. But Myles and Septima both said that if I didn't do it, it wouldn't be done. They wanted someone who was familiar with the philosophy of Highlander. They did not want a professional teacher to do it because they adhere to too strict a curriculum and they wouldn't listen to what the people were saying. So I accepted the challenge.

I had this material from my sister-in-law and she taught from the first to the third grade. That's all the material I had, plus the voter registration material and the Declaration of Human Rights. As soon as I walked in there and started talking with the people, I realized that her material was too juvenile. They were adults and I had to teach them on their level the things that they needed to know.

I had each one of them come up that first night and talk with me about some of the things they would like to learn. I had a little article for them to

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

read and to sign their name. And they would say quietly, "I can't write" or "I can't read that well," and that's how I found out where each one of those students was on that first night.

The people we worked with were denied an education and so we had to teach them how to read and write. I don't remember when they got a full nine months elementary school on Johns Island. They didn't have anything but a little four-month school when Septima was teaching over there. When the people needed them to work in the fields, the farmers just went and knocked on the school house and the kids had to come out. So they didn't even get a full four-month education.

And then they told me the things they wanted to learn, which was to be able to write letters to their relatives that live elsewhere and read letters from them, rather than have to carry them to the white people they worked for to read them for them. They wanted to know how to do money orders. So then I started to teach them what they wanted to learn.

And of course they were conscious of the voting process because Esau had run for school board in 1954. He didn't win because he didn't have enough blacks registered on the island to put him in. They had three positions open and he came in fourth. Well, after that election they started appointing the school board members. Therefore, the students knew the importance of getting registered to vote. So it wasn't hard to sell them that idea. But like I said, I worked with them on the things they wanted to know first.

We had no idea of the school spreading. We were just doing what Esau asked us to do for his people on Johns Island. Well, they started registering to vote, and then they encouraged other people to go and register to vote. People on Johns Island were registering to vote so fast that people on Wadmalaw wanted it. Then Edisto wanted it. Then we wound up in the north area of Charleston with two classes.

Mrs. Bernice Robinson

THE PROGRAM WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By 1961 so many people were asking for the program from all around the South. Myles felt it was getting to the point where we were spreading ourselves too thin. The best thing for us to do was to contact organizations and have them send people in to Highlander to be trained as teachers. We would work with them for one week and train them as teachers. Then they could go back and set up classes.

And then we talked about second-stage classes—political education. Our classes didn't just stick to reading and writing to register to vote. We talked about the power that was in the hands of the people if they know the set-up of the government. So we talked about the set-up and who you go to for what.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

871 641 185 (664) We always told the teachers that if there wasn't an organization in their community, organize that first class into a community organization so that they would meet once a month and could get information about what was going on in their community, what they needed to do, how they needed to pressure their local government about certain things, what they could get from the federal government. And to always try to bring someone in who had some information in those fields, so that it would be a continuing, educating process.

871 668 In the summer of 1961 the program was transferred to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. SCLC continued to do what we had started to do when we had the program at Highlander and that was have organizations send representation to them for a one-week workshop—for teacher training. Then they would go back into their areas. They came from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi.

Mrs. Septima Clark

THE CITIZENSHIP SCHOOLS WERE THE BASE ON WHICH THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WAS BUILT

871 641 666 185 (875) We were trying to make teachers out of people who could barely read and write. But they could teach. The people who left these training sessions went home to teach and to work in voter registration drives. They went home, and they didn't take it anymore. They started their own citizenship classes, discussing the problems in their own towns. "How come the pavement stops where the black section begins?" Asking questions like that, and then knowing who to go to to talk about that or where to protest it.

871 668 641 666 185 One time I heard Andy Young say that the citizenship schools were the base on which the whole civil rights movement was built. And that's probably very much true.

It's true because the citizenship schools made people aware of the political situation in their area. We recruited the wise leaders of their communities, like Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi. Hosea Williams started out as a citizenship school supervisor. The citizenship school classes formed the grassroot basis of new statewide political organizations in South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi. From one end of the South to the other, if you look at the black elected officials and the political leaders, you find people who had their first involvement in the training program of the citizenship school.

It was 1962 before the major civil rights groups were ready to do something about voter registration. But we had developed the ideas of the citizenship schools between 1957 and 1961. So all the civil rights groups could use our kind of approach because by then we knew it worked.

41 Caravan & Caravan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

AFTERWORD

668 In 1961 I was one of the students driven from Albany, Georgia, to Dorchester Center in McIntosh, Georgia, for the first Citizenship Education Training School operated by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Andrew Young had come to Albany to describe the program, which was based on the one Septima Clark, Bernice Robinson, and Esau Jenkins had initiated on Johns Island. Many of us who made up the first class had been suspended from Albany State College for participating in demonstrations and getting arrested. The demonstrations were in support of students who had been arrested after they attempted to buy tickets from the "white only" window of the Trailways bus depot. The demonstrations and increasing arrests quickly developed into a full-blown local movement. The idea of becoming trained to run schools to teach people to register and vote seemed a worthwhile activity to us and to the leaders of the local movement.

971 • 975 641 When we arrived at Dorchester, we met our teachers—Dorothy Cotton, who came from Petersburg, Virginia, to work with SCLC; Septima Clark, who lost her job as a teacher in Charleston because of her membership in the NAACP and her work with Highlander; and Bernice Robinson, who was the first teacher of the citizenship school on Johns Island. In the classes at Dorchester we learned about the political structure of our communities as well as how to teach people to read and write. At that time I had never heard of precinct meetings and knew nothing about the local and state party systems, even though I had done well in my civics and government classes in school. But those classes had nothing to do with what I knew about Georgia. The classes that Septima Clark, Bernice Robinson, and Dorothy Cotton taught were eye-openers to a new way of looking at our community. For the next ten years, the citizenship school program trained grass roots leaders as they rose to action in the growing civil rights movement throughout the South.

(629) 668 S93 114 At Dorchester, Cordell Reagon, a SNCC field (P 285-A)

464 aged men work together on construction crews in nearby towns,
484 some commuting as much as fifty miles each day. Younger men
463 are skilled bricklayers, electricians, and boat operators.
Women's work is now much more isolated than was previously
the case, with the majority of them engaged in domestic work
for individual families or for resort motels on the mainland.
With the easing of segregation practices in the region as a
whole, some women have moved into jobs in the public domain,
such as cashier, store clerk, and delivery of mail. A few
873 women born on the island between 1930 and 1950 have obtained
885 college degrees and now teach in mainland schools or in
schools in other states.

871 Education is highly valued by island residents. Only
one older man in his eighties was encountered who had never
attended school. An early school on the island was held in
the church building, paid for by island residents themselves.
In the thirties one of the wealthy Northerners who had bought
a nearby mainland plantation donated funds for a concrete
two-room school building on the island and paid the salaries
of its first teachers. This school was an elementary one;
those who wanted further education boarded with relatives or
friends in nearby towns and attended their high schools. In
recent years the county school district has provided boat and
bus transportation to mainland schools for both elementary
and high school students; the island school was closed with
consolidation of small county schools about ten years ago.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

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to seven or eight years. Is this process not rapidly de-Gullahizing the Negro dialect? Probably not. It depends a great deal upon the teacher, his own speech, his training, and the possibility of giving the pupils an adequate exposure to standard English. Visiting the humble schools of the various islands, one is struck with several facts. The teacher is nearly always a native, which is as it should be. He, or she, more often the latter on St. Helena, has little training beyond the school in which he teaches, he receives a mere pittance for his work and must do other things to support himself, and as a rule he teaches about seven grades in a one-room building.

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I have heard pupils recite in most of the schools on St. Helena Island. Most of them spell like this: *h-e-a-r-t, haat; m-a-n, mahn; t-h-a-t, dat; w-i-n-e, vine; v-i-n-e, wine; o-i-l, ile;* and the teacher soon despairs of trying to change their habits to any noticeable degree. I once listened to a sixteen year old boy trying to read correctly the simple sentence, "I will give them to the men." With the possible errors *vill, gib, dem, de, mans, mens,* there was not much chance of his ever reading every word correctly. His teacher had him repeat it again and again, but as fast as she made him say one word properly he would go wrong on another one. Finally, after some fifteen trials, she gave up and let him read on in his own fashion. With only a few minutes each day devoted to reading, and with many teachers teaching in the vernacular, there is little chance that the schools will make any serious inroads in the dialect in the present generation. Fifty years, perhaps even a hundred years, from now, the English of the sea-island Negroes will still be looked upon as something unusual.